

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 03698 040514Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-06 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-08 USIA-15
/045 W

-----031074 040620Z /12

R 031132Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8311

UNCLAS COLOMBO 3698

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SCUL, CE

SUBJ: IV GROUP PROGRAM IN CONNECTION WITH ALF-CIO CONVENTION,
NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 18, 1977

REF: (A) STATE 216901; (B) STATE A-1228

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONCURS IN AFL-CIO SUGGESTION THAT MESSRS. S. THONDAMAN AND V.L. BASIL DE SILVA APPROPRIATE CHOICES TO PARTICIPATE IN SUBJECT PROGRAM. MR. THONDAMAN IS FIRST CHOICE OF EMBASSY AND WE PROPOSE TO NOMINATE HIM FOR CU GRANT. DUE LIMITED IV GRANT SLOTS EMBASSY UNABLE EXPEND TWO ON LABOR LEADERS AND THEREFORE WILL NOT REPEAT NOT NOMINATE MR. DE SILVA FOR IV GRANT. HOWEVER, PROGRAM BENEFITS SUCH THAT DE SILVA PARTICIPATION HIGHLY DESIRABLE. FURTHER, EXTRAORDINARY CURRENT ETHNIC/POLITICAL SITUATION IN SRI LANKA MAKES PARTICIPATION BY DE SILVA, A SINHALESE, PARTICULARLY VITAL IF THONDAMAN, A TAMIL, INVITED. THEREFORE, EMBASSY STRONGLY ENDORSES DE SILVA CANDIDACY AND IS COMPELLED TO REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IN SEEKING FUNDS TO FACILITATE HIS PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY.

2. IV GRANT NOMINEE
WHILE EMBASSY WOULD PREFER THAT BOTH CANDIDATES BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN SUBJECT IV PROGRAM, COUNTRY PLAN AND AREA GOALS
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PRECLUDE OUR ALLOTING TWO IV GRANTS TO LABOR LEADERS, ALTHOUGH ONE, THONDAMAN (M.P.) CLEARLY QUALIFIES AS POLITICAL LEADER. THIS, PLUS FACT THAT IN EMBASSY OPINION THONDAMAN'S MANY YEARS OF BROAD EXPERIENCE IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS MAKES HIM BY FAR THE BETTER CANDIDATE FOR PROGRAM OF THIS STATURE AND MAGNITUDE, EMBASSY PROPOSES TO NOMINATE THONDAMAN FOR CU GRANT.

3. ETHNIC/POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

HOWEVER, AS STATED ABOVE, EMBASSY STRONGLY PREFERS THAT BOTH CANDIDATES BE INVITED. THIS PREFERENCE IS NOT BASED SOLELY ON STANDARD CONSIDERATIONS SUCH AS POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED BY PARTICIPATION OF DESERVING YOUNG LABOR LEADER IN SOPHISTICATED U.S.-SPONSORED PROGRAM IN OUR COUNTRY; THERE IS ALSO A POLITICAL CONSIDERATION. RECENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN SINHALESE AND TAMIL ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, THOUGH NO LONGER MARKED BY REPORTS OF VIOLENCE AS ONE MONTH AGO, HAVE LEFT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO STRAINED. MR. THONDAMAN IS TAMIL AND REGARDED AS A LEADER OF THE TAMIL COMMUNITY. (THE MAJORITY OF HIS CEYLON WORKERS CONGRESS MEMBERS ARE TAMILS OF INDIAN ORIGIN). THIS BEING THE CASE, EMBASSY FEELS THAT PARTICIPATION BY DE SILVA, A SINHALESE, EXTREMELY DESIRABLE, AND PERHAPS VITAL, AS WOULD LEND ETHNIC/POLITICAL BALANCE THAT WOULD TEND TO DIMISH LOCAL CRITICISM U.S. MIGHT BE SUBJECTED TO FOR EXTENDING INVITATION TO TAMIL LEADER TO VISIT U.S. AT THIS TIME.

4. IV GRANT LIMITATION

ALTHOUGH EMBASSY CLEARLY IN AGREEMENT WITH AND ENDORSES ALF-CIO SUGGESTION RE CANDIDACY OF BOTH MEN CONCERNED, EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO NOMINATE DE SILVA FOR IV GRANT DUE TO LIMITED NUMBER IV SLOTS ALLOTTED FOR MISSION'S USE. CONSEQUENTLY, WE COMPELLED TO REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IN SEEKING FUNDS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO FACILITATE HIS PARTICIPATION. WE REALIZE REQUEST UNUSUAL AND THAT FUNDING MAY BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE; HOWEVER, SUITABILITY OF CANDIDATES FOR PROGRAM AND IT FOR THEM, AND SENSITIVE POLITICAL SITUATION WARRANT UNUSUAL CONSIDERATION.

5. POSSIBLE SCHEDULE CONFLICTS.

STRONG POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT THONDAMAN WILL BE UNABLE TO ACCEPT INVITATION, IF EXTENDED, DUE TO PRIOR COMMITMENT. (WE UNDERSTAND HE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED TO ATTEND ILO CONFERENCE BANGLADESH NOV. 19-29.) IF INVITATION DECLINED BY THONDAMAN, EMBASSY DOES NOT REPEAT NOT INTEND TO NOMINATE DE SILVA FOR IV GRANT IN HIS PLACE AS WE FEEL DE SILVA'S PARTICIPATION THIS PROGRAM, WHILE DESIRABLE, IS SOMEWHAT LESS IMPERATIVE IF THONDAMAN DOES NOT ATTEND.

6. EMBASSY, WHILE EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF DE SILVA'S PARTICIPATION, WANTS TO MAKE QUITE CLEAR ITS RECOMMENDATION THAT MR. THONDAMAN BE A CANDIDATE FOR CU GRANT AND BE INVITED TO SUBJECT PROGRAM WHETHER DE SILVA INVITED OR NOT. EMBASSY IS CONFIDENT THAT ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE FOR DE SILVA TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FOREIGN LEADERS IN U.S. IF IT NOT POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE PARTICIPATION THIS ONE.

7. BIOGRAPHIC DATA FOR BOTH CANDIDATES FOLLOWS REFTTEL.
WRIGGINS

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
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Errors: N/A
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 216901, 77 STATE A-1228
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 741667
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IV GROUP PROGRAM IN CONNECTION WITH ALF-CIO CONVENTION, NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 18, 1977
TAGS: ELAB, SCUL, CE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/af75a423-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009